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Letter dated 18 May 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I wish to draw your attention to a grave act of terrorism perpetrated this afternoon in the Israeli coastal city of Netanya.

At approximately 12 p.m. (local time), a 20-year-old Palestinian from the nearby town of Tulkarm approached the entrance of a crowded shopping mall and detonated powerful explosives that were strapped to his body. Six Israelis were killed in the blast and over 40 others were injured; scores of others suffered from shock. The attack occurred at the peak of the Friday afternoon shopping hour, when Israelis crowd markets and shopping centres in preparation for the Jewish Sabbath that begins at sundown.

In yet another incident today, Palestinian forces opened fire on an Israeli vehicle travelling in the vicinity of Neveh Tzuf. One Israeli civilian was killed, and the victim's mother was critically injured.

These attacks are merely the latest incidents in the Palestinian terrorist campaign against Israel which has been detailed in my letters dated 11 May 2001 (A/56/72-S/2001/473), 9 May 2001 (A/56/69-S/2001/459), 1 May 2001 (A/55/924-S/2001/435), 23 April 2001 (A/55/910-S/2001/396), 16 April 2001 (A/55/901-S/2001/364), 28 March 2001 (A/55/863-S/2001/291), 27 March 2001 (A/55/860-S/2001/280), 26 March 2001 (A/55/858-S/2001/278), 19 March 2001 (A/55/842-S/2001/244), 5 March 2001 (A/55/821-S/2001/193), 2 March 2001 (A/55/819-S/2001/187), 14 February 2001 (A/55/787-S/2001/137), 13 February 2001 (A/55/781-S/2001/132), 2 February 2001 (A/55/762-S/2001/103), 25 January 2001 (A/55/748-S/2001/81), 23 January 2001 (A/55/742-S/2001/71), 28 December 2000 (A/55/719-S/2000/1252), 22 November 2000 (A/55/641-S/2000/1114), 20 November 2000 (A/55/634-S/2000/1108) and 2 November 2000 (A/55/540-S/2000/1065). Eighty-nine Israelis have been killed since the outbreak of hostilities in late September.

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The Government of Israel holds the Palestinian Authority responsible for both of today's attacks. For nearly eight months, the Palestinian Authority has not only failed to rein in terrorist groups, but has in fact encouraged and abetted their activities. Scores of Palestinian terrorists have been released from prisons, including many who had been involved in murders of Israeli civilians. Terrorist groups have been granted nearly complete freedom of movement and action and are free to carry out attacks with impunity. The Palestinian leadership has made it clear, both in word and in deed, that attacks on Israelis can be perpetrated without any fear of punishment or incarceration.

The Palestinian leadership has also perpetuated a relentless campaign of incitement and hate propaganda in the Palestinian media and educational institutions. Just recently, the American television network MSNBC reported on initiatives to recruit children for participation in confrontations with Israeli troops. A commercial on the official Palestinian television station, specifically targeted to Palestinian youngsters, calls on them to "drop their toys, pick up rocks, and do battle with Israel".

Other examples abound. On 7 May 2001, the Palestinian daily *Al-Iyyam* printed a religious ruling of the Palestinian Religious Council which legitimized suicide attacks against "the Israeli enemy" as permissible under Islamic law, granting them the status of "shahid" (martyr). The Palestinian Minister of Religious and Endowment Affairs (The *wakf*), in an interview on Egyptian television on 29 April 2001, stated: "These suicide attacks are a legitimate means for Palestinians fighting the enemy. Their purpose is to serve Allah, and by these attacks they are fighting on behalf of Allah and on behalf of the Islamic faith and the homeland. The attacks are the judgment of Allah."

It is clear that the Palestinian Authority is practicing a subtle "division of labour" with Hamas and Islamic Jihad. On the one hand, the Palestinian Authority is trying to preserve its international stature as a credible partner for dialogue, while simultaneously unleashing Hamas and Islamic Jihad and other extremist organizations on Israeli citizens. Such duplicity is utterly unacceptable.

It must be recalled that Chairman Arafat's commitment of 9 September 1993 was not only to renounce terrorism, but also to control and discipline all Palestinian factions that engage in this practice. The position of the Palestinian Authority throughout the last several months of hostilities represents a grave violation of this commitment.

Israel remains committed to pursuing every avenue for a renewal of negotiations. However, peace cannot be advanced while terrorist bombings of Israeli civilians continue, and while the Palestinian leadership continues to foster an atmosphere of hate in which intolerable acts of terrorism are an acceptable pattern of behaviour.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter circulated as a document of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, under item 179 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Yehuda **Lancry**
Permanent Representative